

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method, comprising:  
establishing a warehouse in a selected geographical region;  
receiving and storing inventory from a plurality of different business entities at  
said established warehouse;  
charging said plurality of business entities for said storage based at least in  
part on actual storage space used by said business entity, wherein said one or more  
business entities are based in remote geographical regions; and  
providing on-demand access to inventory information at said warehouse to at  
least one of said one or more business entities.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said on-demand access is provided via  
a global computer network.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said global computer network is the  
Internet.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising:  
receiving and storing inventory for said plurality of business entities at a  
second warehouse; and  
providing on-demand access to inventory information at said first warehouse  
and said second warehouse to at least one of said plurality of business entities.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing step comprises:  
tracking inventory at said warehouse for said plurality of business entities;  
allowing said plurality of business entities to access said tracked inventory  
information via a global communications network; and  
displaying information to said plurality of business entities.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said displayed information includes information selected from the group consisting of said tracked inventory information, accounts payable information, and accounts receivable information.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein said displayed information is customized based at least in part on the geographical location of said business entity.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein said displayed information is customized based at least in part on said selected geographical region.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said warehouse serves as a base hub for one or more business entities located in said selected geographical region.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said hub includes a database of worldwide inventory of said one or more business entities.

11. The method of claim 2, further comprising providing one or more business services to said one or more business entities from said warehouse on an outsourcing basis.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said one or more business services include telemarketing services.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein said one or more business services include variable cost billing services.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein said one or more business services include shipping services.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein said one or more business services include sales services.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein said one or more business services include fulfilling orders for materials.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said orders are accepted via said global computer network.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising presenting a customized front end for controlling flow of said materials through said warehouse.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said customization of said front end is based at least in part on said selected geographical location.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said customization is based at least in part on the location of a user accessing said customized front end.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein said customization comprises presenting information to said user in a language local to said selected geographical location.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein said presented information includes a sales presentation.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein said customization comprises presenting price information to said user for an order comprising said material in a currency local to said selected geographical region.

24. The method of claim 19, wherein said customization comprises presenting price information to said user for an order comprising a material at a different geographical region in a currency local to said different geographical region.

25. A method of inventory management over a global computer network, comprising:

receiving a request for a product of one or more business entities at a web server;

5 determining on-demand the availability of said product in one or more warehouses associated with said web server;

communicating with another server associated with another warehouse over a global computer network to determine on-demand the availability of said product at said another warehouse, if said product is not available at said one or more warehouses; and

10 accepting an order for said product at said web server.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said web server is associated with a distribution center and said distribution center has said one or more warehouses associated with it.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein said request for said product is received from a user accessing said web server via a web browser.

28. The method of claim 25, wherein said request for said product is received from a representative at a distribution center.

29. The method of claim 25, wherein said web server is a base hub for a business entity providing said requested product.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein said request for said product includes a product number for said product and the number of units of said product.

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31. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

displaying a sales presentation to said user prior to receiving said request from said user, wherein said sales presentation is customized based on the location of said first web server.

32. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

displaying a sales presentation to said user prior to receiving said request from said user, wherein said sales presentation is customized based on the location of said user.

33. The method of claim 27, further comprising:

presenting information to said user about said product, wherein said information is customized based on the location of said web server.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein said information is presented to said user in a language that is commonly used at the location of said web server.

35. The method of claim 33, wherein said information presented to said user includes the price of said product, wherein said price is displayed to said user in a currency that is commonly used at the location of said web server.

36. The method of claim 33, wherein said presenting information step further comprises:

storing information in a database associated with said web server in different formats;

determining a particular format in which to present said stored information;  
and

retrieving said stored information in said particular format for presentation to said user.

37. The method of claim 26, wherein said communicating step comprises:  
selecting another distribution center; and

communicating with said selected distribution center to determine if said  
product is available at one or more warehouses associated with said selected  
distribution center.

38. The method of claim 25, wherein said order includes a product  
identifier and the number of units for said product.

39. The method of claim 25, further comprising:

selecting a warehouse from the group consisting of said one or more  
warehouses and said another warehouse for fulfilling said accepted order.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein said accepted order includes a  
product identifier and a number of units of said product.

41. The method of claim 40, further comprising:

subtracting said number of units of said product from an inventory of said  
selected warehouse; and

communicating said accepted order to said selected warehouse via said global  
computer network.

42. The method of claim 41, further comprising:

fulfilling said communicated order at said selected warehouse.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein said fulfilling step comprises:

picking at least said number of units of said product associated with said  
order; and

packing said number of units of said product for shipping.

44. The method of claim 25, wherein said global computer network is the Internet.

45. The method of claim 37, further comprising:

providing information about the inventory of said one or more warehouses associated with said selected distribution center periodically to said web server associated with said first distribution center to update inventory information in said web server associated with said first distribution center.

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46. A system for inventory management over a global computer network, comprising:

a web server including a master client database and a local inventory database, wherein said web server receives a request for a product from a customer wherein said master client database includes information relating to the inventory of a particular client at a plurality of its warehouses, including the warehouses with which said local servers are associated.; and

one or more local servers associated with said web server, wherein said one or more local servers and said web server are geographically distributed, wherein each of said local servers is associated with a warehouse and includes a warehouse inventory database, wherein said web server communicates with said local servers via a global communication network, and wherein inventory information can be assessed on-demand by said client.

47. The system of claim 46, wherein said master client database further includes information selected from the group consisting of set-up information, business rules, orders, order history, and shipping information regarding said particular client.

48. The system of claim 46, wherein said local inventory database includes information relating to the inventory of another client, wherein said inventory is located at the warehouses with which said local servers are associated.

49. The system of claim 46, wherein upon receiving said request from said customer, said master client database is searched to determine if said product is available at the warehouses with which said local servers are associated.

50. The system of claim 48, wherein upon receiving said request from said customer, said local inventory database is searched to determine if said product is available at the warehouses with which said local servers are associated.



51. The system of claim 46, wherein said web server is associated with a distribution center.

52. The system of claim 49, further comprising:  
a second web server including another master client database and another local inventory database, wherein said first web server communicates with said second web server via a global computer network.

53. The system of claim 52, wherein said second web server is associated with a second distribution center.

54. The system of claim 53, further comprising:  
one or more local servers associated with said second web server wherein each of said local servers is associated with a warehouse.

55. The system of claim 54, wherein said one or more local servers is searched to determine if said product is available at a warehouse associated with said one or more local servers.

56. A computer program product having a computer readable medium with computer program logic recorded thereon for use in a system for inventory management over a global computer network, said computer program product comprising:

5 code for receiving a request for a product at a web server;

code for determining on-demand the availability of said product in one or more warehouses associated with said web server;

code for communicating with another server associated with another warehouse over a global computer network to determine on-demand the availability of said product at said another warehouse, if said product is not available at said one or more warehouses; and

code for accepting an order for said product at said web server.

57. The computer program product of claim 56, wherein said web server is a base hub for a business entity providing said requested product.

58. The computer program product of claim 57, wherein said request for said product includes a product number for said product and the number of units of said product.

59. The computer program product of claim 56, wherein said request for said product is received from a user accessing said web server via a web browser.

60. The computer program product of claim 59, further comprising:

code for presenting information to said user about said product, wherein said information is customized based on the location of said web server.

61. The computer program product of claim 60, wherein said code for presenting information further comprises:

code for storing information in a database associated with said web server in different formats;

5 code for determining a particular format in which to present said stored information; and

code for retrieving said stored information in said particular format for presentation to said user.

62. The computer program product of claim 56, further comprising:

code for selecting a warehouse from the group consisting of said one or more warehouses and said another warehouse for fulfilling said accepted order.

63. The computer program product of claim 62, wherein said accepted order includes a product identifier and a number of units of said product.

64. The computer program product of claim 63, further comprising:

code for subtracting said number of units of said product from an inventory of said selected warehouse; and

5 code for communicating said accepted order to said selected warehouse via said global computer network.

65. The computer program product of claim 64, wherein said communicated order is fulfilled at said selected warehouse.

66. The computer program product of claim 56, wherein said global computer network is the Internet.

code for providing information about the inventory of said one or more warehouses associated with said selected distribution center periodically to said web server associated with said first distribution center to update inventory information in said web server associated with said first distribution center.